A NATIONAL AMENDMENT FOR WOMAN SUFFRAGE

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The movement for woman suffrage is now approaching its last stage, the goal of the early workers, which it has been left for the third generation to attain. A number of outposts have had to be taken, a vast amount of educational effort has been necessary to create a sentiment in favor of Congressional action on this matter of universal concern. Much work will still have to be done but the progress is sufficient to demonstrate that an amendment to the National Constitution for the enfranchisement of women is a certainty of the near future.

The first convention to consider the Rights of Women was called by Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others in 1848, to meet at Seneca Falls in Western New York, Mrs. Stanton's home. In 1851 the work was taken up by Susan B. Anthony, destined to be its supreme leader for the next half century. Meetings soon began to take place and societies to be formed in various States, so that by 1861 there was a well-defined movement toward woman suffrage. Large conventions were held annually in Eastern and Western cities, in which the most prominent men and women partici-

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pated. The commencement of the Civil War ended all efforts for this purpose and its leaders devoted themselves for the next five years to the women's part of every war. In 1866 Mrs. Stanton and Miss Anthony issued a call for the scattered forces to come together in convention in New York City, and here began the movement for woman suffrage which has continued without a break.

In the earlier days there had been no thought of enfranchising women in any way except through the submission of the question to the voters by the Legislature of each State, but now Congress, for the purpose of giving the ballot to the recently freed negro men, was about to submit an amendment to the National Constitution. This convention was called to protest against "class legislation" and demand that women should be included. It adopted a Memorial to Congress, prepared by Mrs. Stanton, which contained a portion of Charles Sumner's great speech, "Equal Rights for All," and was a complete statement of woman's right to the franchise. In Miss Anthony's address she said: "Up to this hour we have looked only to State action for recognition of our rights, but now, by the results of the war, the whole question of suffrage reverts to Congress and the United States Constitution. The duty of Congress at this moment is to declare what shall be the true basis of representation in a republican form of government."

The petitions which during the preceding winter had been sent to Congress represented the first effort ever made for an amendment to the Federal Constitution for woman suffrage, and the action of this convention marked the first organized demand—May 10, 1866. At this time the American Equal Rights Association was formed. The following month the 14th Amendment was submitted by Congress for the ratification of the State Legislatures, and it was declared adopted by the necessary three-fourths in July, 1868.

By this amendment the status of citizenship was for the first time definitely established—"All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof are citizens." This plainly put men and women on an exact equality as to citizenship. Then followed the broad statement: "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States." This also seemed to guarantee the equal rights of men and women. It was the second section which aroused the advocates of suffrage for women to vigorous protest:

"Section 2. Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each state, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice-President of

the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to the *male* inhabitants of such State, being 21 years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such *male* citizens shall bear to the whole number of *male* citizens 21 years of age in such State."

Up to this time there was no mention of suffrage in the Federal Constitution except the provision for electing members of the lower house of Congress, but now for the first time it actually discriminated against women by imposing a penalty on the States for preventing men from voting but leaving them entirely free to prohibit women. When even this penalty proved insufficient to protect negro men in their attempts to vote, Congress in 1869 submitted a 15th Amendment which was declared ratified the following year: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude."

Again those who had been striving for two decades to obtain suffrage for women protested by every means in their power against this second discrimination. They implored

and demanded that the word "sex" should be included in this amendment, which would have forever settled the question, just as the omission of the word "male" in the 14th Amendment would have settled it. The most of the men who had stood by them in their early struggles for the vote, when both were working together for the freedom of the slaves, now sacrificed them rather than imperil the political rights of the negro men. Some of the women themselves were persuaded to abandon their opposition to these amendments by the promise of the party leaders that as soon as they were safely intrenched in the constitution another should be placed there providing for woman suffrage. This promise they never tried to keep and it still remains unfulfilled.

Miss Anthony and Mrs. Stanton were never for one moment deceived or silenced, but in their paper, *The Revolution,* they opposed these amendments as long as they were pending. A single quotation will indicate the tenor of their continuous protests: "The proposed amendment for manhood suffrage not only rouses woman's prejudices against the negro but on the other hand his contempt and hostility towards her. . . . While we fully appreciate the philosophy that every extension of rights prepares the way for greater freedom to new classes and hastens the day of liberty to all, we at the same time see the immediate effect of class

enfranchisement to be greater tyranny and abuse of those who have no voice in the government. Had Irishmen been disfranchised in this country they would have made common cause with the negro in fighting for his rights, but when exalted above him they proved his worst enemies. The negro will be the victim for generations to come of the prejudice engendered by making this a white man's government. While the enfranchisement of each new class of white men was a step toward his ultimate freedom, it increased his degradation in the transition period, and he touched the depths when all men but himself were crowned with citizenship. Just so with woman; while the enfranchisement of all men hastens the day for justice to her, it makes her degradation more complete in the transition state. It is to escape the added tyranny, persecutions, insults, horrors which surely will be visited upon her in the establishment of an aristocracy of sex in this republic, that we raise our indignant protest against this desecration of woman in the pending amendment."

Although the protests were in vain the women had learned that they might be relieved of the intolerable burden of having to obtain the suffrage State by State through permission of a majority of the individual voters. They had seen an entire class enfranchised through the quicker and easier

way of amending the Federal Constitution, and they determined to invoke this power in their own behalf. From the office of *The Revolution* in the autumn of 1868 went out thousands of petitions to be signed and sent to Congress for the submission of an amendment to enfranchise women. Immediately after its assembling in December, 1868, Senator S. C. Pomeroy, of Kansas, introduced a resolution providing that "the basis of suffrage shall be that of citizenship, and all native or naturalized citizens shall enjoy the same rights and privileges of the elective franchise, but each State shall determine the age, etc." A few days later Representative George W. Julian, of Indiana, offered one in the House which declared: "The right of suffrage shall be based on citizenship . . . and all citizens, native or naturalized, shall enjoy this right equally . . . without any distinction or discrimination founded on sex." These were the first propositions ever made in Congress for woman suffrage by National Amendment.

In order to impress Congress with the seriousness of the demand, a convention—the first of its kind to meet in the National Capital—was held in Washington in January, 1869, It continued several days with large audiences and an array of eminent speakers, including Lucretia Mott, Clara Barton, Mrs. Stanton, a number of men and Miss Anthony, the moving spirit of the

whole. In response Congress the next month submitted the 15th Amendment with even a stronger discrimination against women than the 14th contained.

The annual gatherings of the Equal Rights Association had been growing more and more stormy while the 14th and 15th Amendments were pending and the point was reached where any criticism of them made by the women was met by their advocates with hisses and denunciation. Finally at the meeting of May 12, 1869, in New York City, with Mrs. Stanton presiding, an attempt was made, led by Frederick Douglass, to force through a resolution of endorsement. Miss Anthony opposed it in an impassioned speech in which she said: "If you will not give the whole loaf of justice to the entire people, then give it first to women, to the most intelligent and capable of them at least. . . . If Mr. Douglass has noticed who applauded when he said black men first and white women afterwards, he would have seen that it was only the men."

The men succeeded in wresting the control of the convention from the women, who then decided that the time had come for them to have their own organization and endeavor to have the question of their enfranchisement considered entirely on its own merits. Three days later, at the Women's Bureau in East 23rd Street, where now the Metropolitan

Life Building stands, with representatives present from nineteen States, the National Woman Suffrage Association was formed. Mrs. Stanton was made president, Miss Anthony chairman of the executive committee. One hundred women became members that evening and here was begun the organized work for an Amendment to the Federal Constitution to confer woman suffrage which was to continue without ceasing for more than forty years.

Before the work for a 16th Amendment was fairly organized, however, a number of members of Congress and constitutional lawyers took the ground that women were already enfranchised by the first clause of the 14th Amendment. At the convention held at St. Louis in the autumn of 1869, Francis Minor, a prominent lawyer of that city, presented this question so convincingly, that the newly formed National Association took up and conducted an active campaign in its favor for several years. In 1872 women tried to vote in a number of States and in some of them were successful. Miss Anthony's vote was accepted in Rochester, N. Y., and later she was arrested, charged with a crime, tried by a Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court and fined $100.00. The inspectors in St. Louis refused to register Mrs. Minor, she brought suit against them, and her husband carried the case to the

Supreme Court of the United States (Minor vs. Happersett). He presented an able and exhaustive argument but an adverse decision was rendered March 29, 1875.

The women then returned to the original demand for a 16th Amendment, which indeed many of them, including Miss Anthony and Mrs. Stanton, never had entirely abandoned. Beginning with 1870 Congressional committees had granted a hearing on woman suffrage every winter, even though no resolution was before them. Under the auspices of the National Association, petitions by the tens of thousands poured into Congress, which were publicly presented. Finally on January 10, 1878, Senator A. A. Sargent, of California, offered the following joint resolution: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

The Committee on Privileges and Elections granted a hearing which consumed a part of two days, with the large Senate reception room filled to overflowing and the corridors crowded. Extended hearings were given also by the House committee, and constitutional arguments of the highest order were made by noted women in attendance at the national suffrage convention. And yet the Senate committee reported adversely and the House committee not at all.

This took place nearly forty years ago.

Senator Sargent's amendment, which during the 63d Congress was known as the Bristow-Mondell Amendment, has been presented to every Congress during this period and hearings have been granted by committees of every one. The women who have made their pleadings and arguments simply to persuade these committees to give a favorable report and bring the question before their respective Houses for debate, have comprised the most distinguished this country has produced. It is only by reading their addresses in the History of Woman Suffrage that one can form an idea of their masterly exposition of laws and constitution, their logic, strength and often-times deep pathos.

There are in the pages of history many detached speeches of rare eloquence for the rights of man, but nowhere else is there so long unbroken a record of appeals for these rights—the rights of man and woman. Again and again at the close of the suffrage hearings the chairman and members of the committee have said that none on other questions equalled them in dignity and ability. From 1878 to 1896 there were five favorable majority reports from Senate committees and two from House committees, and nine adverse reports. After this, when Miss Anthony no longer spent her winters in Washington, none of any kind was made until the movement for woman suffrage entered a new era in 1914.

One significant event, however, occurred during this time. Largely through the efforts of Senator Henry W. Blair, of New Hampshire, the resolution for a 16th Amendment was brought before the Senate. After a long and earnest discussion the vote on January 25, 1887, resulted in 16 ayes, all Republican; 34 nays, eleven Republican, twenty-three Democratic; twenty-six absent.

It soon became apparent to the leaders of the movement that there would have to be a good deal of favorable action by the States before Congress would give serious consideration to this question, and therefore under the auspices of the National Association, they have continuously helped with money and work the campaigns for securing the suffrage by amendment of State constitutions. Miss Anthony herself took part in seven such campaigns, only to see all of them end in failure. Up to 1910 there had been at least twenty and only two had been successful—Colorado, 1893; Idaho, 1896; Wyoming and Utah had come into the Union with equal suffrage in their constitutions, but all were sparsely settled States whose influence on Congress was slight. Commercialism had become the dominating force in politics and moral issues were crowded into the background.

In 1910 an insurgent movement developed in Congress and extended into various States

to throw off the party yoke and adopt progressive measures. One of its first fruits was the granting of suffrage to women in the State of Washington. Under the same influence the women of California were enfranchised in 1911, a far-reaching victory. In 1912 Oregon, Arizona and the well populated State of Kansas adopted woman suffrage. In 1913 the Legislature of Alaska gave votes to women, and that of Illinois granted all the suffrage possible without a referendum to the electors, including municipal, county and that for presidential electors. In 1914 Nevada and Montana completed the enfranchisement of women in the western part of the United States, over a third of the whole area.

The effect upon Congress of the addition of this vast body of between three and four million women to the electorate was immediately apparent. A woman suffrage amendment to the Federal Constitution had suddenly become a live issue. The national Association appointed a committee to remain in Washington and look after its interests. A circumstance greatly in its favor was the shattering of the traditional idea that the Federal Constitution must not be further amended, by the adoption of two new Articles—for an income tax and the election of U. S. Senators by popular vote.

At the opening of the 63d Congress the chairmanship of the Committee on Woman Suffrage instead of being filled by an "anti,"

as heretofore, was given to Senator Charles S. Thomas, of Colorado, always an ardent suffragist, and a friendly committee was appointed. There were now eighteen members of the Senate with women constituents and several million women were eligible to vote, so that it was possible to bring to bear a pressure which had never before existed. Many of the large newspapers and a considerable public sentiment had now become favorable. The committee reported the bill with but one dissenting voice. The extended discussion was conducted by Senator Henry F. Ashurst, of Arizona, and the vote on March 19, 1914, stood, ayes, 35; nays, 34; lacking eleven of a two-thirds majority. Twenty Republicans, one Progressive and fourteen Democrats voted aye; twelve Republicans and twenty-two Democrats voted no.

The struggle to secure a vote in the House of Representatives was long and difficult. Many committee hearings were held; the Democratic caucus declined to allow it to come before the House; the Judiciary Committee for a long time refused to report it and finally did so without recommendation. At last, however, under the leadership of the Hon. Frank W. Mondell, of Wyoming, it was brought to a vote January 12, 1915, after a discussion that lasted ten hours—174 ayes, 204 nays. Eighty-six Democrats and eighty-eight Republicans and Progressives voted

aye; 171 Democrats and thirty-three Republicans voted no.

The effort will continue without cessation until such an amendment is submitted. One has only to make a superficial study of campaigns for amending State constitutions to recognize the cruel burdens they put upon women. If after all the expenditure of labor, time and money they had a fair chance they might be more willing to undertake the task, but no class striving for any object ever faced such obstacles. They find arrayed against them the corporate interests that oppose any further increase of voters; the liquor interests with their vast capital and the immense number of votes they control; all the forces of evil that prey on society; the party "machines" that look with dread on this new element in politics; the large body of foreign men that come from countries where they are born and bred in the belief of woman's inferiority, and that large number of narrow-minded, non-progressive American men who believe woman's sphere was fixed in the Garden of Eden.

This is the electorate which women must face after an effort usually of years to persuade the Legislature to submit the question. They must strain every nerve to raise the necessary funds; they must leave their homes and spend months in the hardest campaigning, subject to humiliations they would not meet in going to the polls for a

lifetime, and when election day comes they cannot cast a single vote on the measure for which they have toiled. An adverse majority, no matter how small, sends them back to the very beginning of the struggle.

There have been altogether over thirty-five of these campaigns and victories in only nine as the meager result. In 1914 there were seven campaigns and only two successful. In 1915 there were four, with no new state won for equal suffrage, although over a million votes were cast in its favor. American men in the full enjoyment of a franchise which has cost them nothing whatever have no right to require this sacrifice of American women. They should demand of Congress the submission of an amendment to the National Constitution which will free women from the unbearable conditions of an appeal to the individual voters with their secret ballot, and enable them to carry their case to the Legislatures and have it decided there. This would not be an interference with States' rights, for the question would be decided in each by the body elected to represent the people, and indirectly by the men of the State, for they alone elect the Legislature. Suffragists throughout the country have become thoroughly aroused to the situation and henceforth will concentrate their forces on Congress until it submits a National Amendment.

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